

Punjab

Give Peace A Chance

By A.S. Narang

The much awaited all party meeting held on 17 October 1989, was not attended by the two Akali Dals and the Congress along with its allies AIADMK, National Conference and the Kerala Congress dissociated itself from the consensus paper adopted at the meeting. It suggests that understanding on Punjab remains divided on party lines as it was before elections. Only difference is that the parties which favoured a political solution through dialogue are now in a little better position being in the government. But, how far these parties go in the absence of a national consensus and particularly, apathetic, if not non-cooperative, attitude by Akalis and other organizations that matter.

While the former Punjab Chief Minister Prakash Singh Badal has clarified that by not attending the meeting his faction was not boycotting it, Mr. Simranjit Singh Mann has only listed eight condi-

tions conducive to negotiations. On the other hand The All India Sikh Students Federation (Manjit) has alleged that the Janata Dal was still to prove its sincerity.

Given the events of last fifteen days or so it seems Akalis are not prepared to learn much and remain struck in the dangerous game of one-up-man-ship. Within a fortnight of its coming into power the National Front government has expressed through words and deeds its desire that agony of Punjab must be ended expeditiously. Starting from Prime Minister, V.P. Singh's visit to Amritsar, appointment of Mr. Nirmal Mukharjee as Governor of the State, convening of the all-party meeting, its decision to repeal 59th Constitutional amendment in the very first session of Ninth Lok Sabha etc. are positive steps in the right direction. In addition, more than one National Front spokesman have made clear that culprits of 1984 riots will be brought to book irrespective of progress on Punjab crisis.

At the same time apart from the fact that National Front has to

resolve all the problems within the framework of the Indian Constitution (this does not rule out any amendments in the Constitution) and without compromising the unity and integrity of the country, the government has also to keep in mind the repercussions in other parts of the country and many other movements active and simmering. Also any solution has to be acceptable to India at large.

Redeeming Feature

It seems that for Akalis all this is not much important. For them seeing beyond Punjab and even within Punjab beyond petty factions seems to be a difficult task. They does not seem to realise that it is a bleeding and bankrupt Punjab that has fallen into the lap of the present government. Already thousands have died in an unending bloodshed and many have experienced horrifying conditions in jails. More than any thing what Punjab needs today is peace. All demands, disputes and differences can wait. Only thing is that intentions of the government

should not be doubtful. And at least for the time being these are not. Therefore Akalis are required to be reasonable and accommodative.

Another redeeming feature of the last elections is that voters in the State foiled the bid to divide the people and let Congress party have the major share of powers. The people gave the rulers a hastening which they never imagined. But they also punished the Akalis for their ditherings and factional fights. People are not only fed up with continuous violence and suppression but also concerned with the state of economy which is in ruins.

New Initiative

Therefore all must support the "Broad Consensus" arrived at the All-Party meeting which concludes by calling for fresh approach that must be sustained in order to resolve the Punjab problem on an ending basis. The opportunity that has come our way now must be seized by all con-

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Thorny Path For V.P. Singh

By S. Nihal Singh

Two facts stand out as Vishwanath Pratap Singh takes a measure of his immense new burdens. He will seek to use his very weakness—the fragility of the Janata Dal and the minority status of his government—as his strength. Second, his aim remains very much to prise away the bulk of the Congress party to form a new centrist organization with like-minded persons in the Janata Dal.

The outcome of V.P. Singh's daring venture will depend upon how he and his government perform in the short term and how much time he has to make his mark. In other words, will the possible collapse of the Janata Dal stemming from its factional and other squabbles give him the time to demonstrate to the country that he has it in him to be a worthy leader?

The coming together of the bulk of the Congress and the Janata Dal into a new centrist party will, in turn, depend upon how Rajiv Gandhi and his party acquit themselves in elections to state assemblies, now a mere few months

away. It will also turn on Rajiv's generalship and how he translates the "constructive cooperation" he has promised the new government into his own and his partymen's

Dal. And it is here that he is using his weakness as his weapon. Everyone knows that the delicate edifice of the National Front would collapse like a house of cards if



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behaviour in Parliament and the state assemblies.

There is little doubt that V.P. Singh and his colleagues and antagonists know the interim nature of the present dispensation. The immediate threat comes not so much from the disparate opposition that has chosen to support the new government for its own reasons, but from within the Janata Dal. And it is here that he is using his weakness the Janata

V.P. Singh were to quit.

In a sense, of course, V.P. Singh's position is somewhat like that of the Pope who exercises influence in his worldwide parish without battalions of armed troops. He has fewer chelas in the Janata Dal Parliamentary party than Chandra Shekhar, not to speak of Devi Lal's squad. Chandra Shekhar would be easier to deal with because he is a known dissident. Others in the party nursing bruised

egos could be more difficult to handle.

Thus far, V.P. Singh deserves full marks for what he has been to achieve, despite the ruse he played on Chandra Shekhar to ensure his own leadership. His first address to the nation struck the right note. And in choosing his ministers and the portfolios they should have, he has acted with political savvy and a measure of daring.

V.P. Singh had to propitiate Devi Lal by offering him the Deputy Prime Minister's post. That was the pound of flesh the Haryana leader extracted for being part of the ruse to trick Chandra Shekhar. But he has succeeded in steering Devi Lal and other such claimants as Arun Nehru and Ajit Singh away from the crucial home portfolio. In the process, he has introduced the innovation of appointing Mufti Mohammed Sayeed, the first Muslim Home Minister. On the other side, the lowly position foreign policy has in the Prime Minister's scheme of things is clear from the low ranking given to I.K. Gujral, the External Affairs Minister. He has thereby confirmed the impression that his government would be inward-looking.

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LETTERS

Do's And Don'ts For New Government

The Janata Dal and its allies have succeeded in dislodging the Congress(I) government. Now it remains to be seen whether they are capable of delivering goods.

The National Front looks promising with an impressive line-up of political figures unlike the erstwhile Janata Government of 1977 which comprised mostly old and eccentric men who made fools of themselves. The new government must not forget that it has not come to power with a landslide victory. Almost half the nation is wary of the new government and unless it performs well it may not live to see its full term. However, here are some points for those in power to remember:

- "He who governs least governs best." Working on this premise should reduce a lot of headaches.
- They should avoid making blanket policies on issues such as religion and language. The court must decide the Ayodhya issue.
- They should not insist on (a) ban on cow slaughter as this would become a religious issue; (b) prohibition, since prohibition *per se* is a failure—persuasion, not prohibition, is the answer; (c) propagation of Hindi, since a huge majority in the South, East and the North-east would never accept its imposition.
- Top priority should be given to environment protection (which never figured in Mr. V.P. Singh's inaugural address) and pollution control; population growth; and education (which should be in the private sector as governments so far have failed to achieve any substantial improvement in the country's literacy rate).
- The new government should

safeguard the freedom of the press and encourage freedom of expression in arts, theatre, literature, films and T.V. Free flow of information and uninhibited intellectual growth should be encouraged.

- The middle class must be given tax relief and those taxes that hamper the growth of free trade should be abolished.
- The government must be the guardian angel of the minorities.
- A liberal economy should be encouraged. The government must allow more foreign investments. It should emulate the Eastern bloc countries, that are opening up (communism having proved a failure) and the South-East Asian countries and Japan that have a free economy.

The National Front has five years or less to show its merit. If Mr. Rajiv Gandhi tried to take us to the 21st century, albeit with some mistakes, we hope Messrs V.P. Singh and Devi Lal will not take the country back to the middle ages.

Siliguri

Nelson A. Petrie

Thackeray's Warning

Bal Thackeray, the Shiv Sena supremo, has warned Mr. V.P. Singh against appeasing Muslims and declared that the Sena-BJP alliance would ban 'Namaz' (prayer) on the roads and the use of loudspeakers in Mosques.

Thackeray might be justified in his own way to warn the Prime Minister against appeasing the Muslims, but under what authority or under moral duty he dictates the government to ban the 'Namaz' on the roads and the use of loudspeakers in Mosques. The same person, sometime back, threatened the Sikhs with a boycott by the Hindus throughout India. It is a misfortune of the country if such characters are not corrected by the concerned community, whose duty is to ensure cordial atmosphere and unity of the country.

Here the BJP will have to take special note of this. The BJP, one of the major national political parties which has received widespread support in the recent general elections, must come forward preventing Mr. Thackeray making any such unwarranted statements and comments.

The elections have proved one point beyond any ambiguity that a common man would not support any communally oriented party. Therefore, BJP should either make Bal Thackeray to shun hatred towards other communities or sever its political connections with the Sena to retain faith of the people of other communities.

Bal Thackeray will do well if he takes a lesson from Maharaja Ranjit Singh, who was once approached by some Sikhs with a complaint against the Muslims that they should be stopped from giving early morning 'Azan' (call)

as it disturbs them. The Maharaja replied, "Yes, I will put ban on their early morning 'Azan', provided the Sikhs go round the Muslim houses to wake them up to say their morning prayers". They felt sorry and went back. And thereafter, no such Complaints came.

New Delhi

Lt. Col. Manohar Singh (Retd.)

How To Strengthen Secular Cause

Now that the new Government at the Centre is consolidating its position, it is time to exercise political will for strengthening the cause of secularism. Recent events indicate that unscrupulous politicians have unleashed communal and obscurantist forces. Recommendations made by previous inquiry commissions, such as those headed by Mr Justice Madan and Mr Justice Saxena, should be studied to find out the root cause of communal riots.

The minorities, and fundamentalists of any religion, should not be placated through charades such as the Muslim Women's Bill, ban on books (such as Salman Rushdie's), and giving nods of approval to the Ramshila business.

A secular society should encourage worship at home or at places meant for this purpose. Religious processions, which generally are aggressive, tend far too often to inflame passions, which are then exploited by anti-social elements to their advantage. A way must be found by consensus to regularize or ban such processions.

Anti-riot squads comprising specially trained personnel from all communities should be formed for quick deployment in sensitive areas. The Government should commit itself to inducting educated members of minority communities into the armed and police forces. This will bring the minorities into the mainstream of Indian society and give them a sense of security.

While granting autonomy to the electronic media, steps must be taken to ensure that television is not used to promote personality cults or narrow beliefs. Soap operas with blatantly religious themes, which only serve as an opiate for the masses, must be avoided. Themes from Hindu mythology, without proper emphasis on the spiritual philosophic values, appear to have become counter-productive for the cause of secularism. Recent announcements that certain telefilms will be based on the Bible and the Koran will only add to this trend.

Even after 40 years of independence, education is being neglected. This means no osmosis can take place to achieve social and economic justice which ultimately will lead to humanism and true secularism.

BHARATI & HAMEED JAFFREY
BOMBAY

Sound And Fury

"Tum sub chor ho. Chullu bhar pani mein doob maro." (You are all thieves. May you drown in a handful of water)

—One voter's inscription on his ballot paper in Delhi.

"We consider communists and communism as wholly irrelevant to India and indeed the whole world."

—L.K. Advani, BJP President

"We will form the (next) government."

—Rajiv Gandhi, before election results were announced.

"This time's Kichdi (the opposition) will have 14-15 dals of different sizes and you can imagine the stomach ache this will give us."

—Rajiv Gandhi

"In fact I relish Kichdi."

—Jyoti Basu, West Bengal Chief Minister

"How can they (the people) do this...I've worked so hard, they should be grateful."

—Jagdish Tytler, defeated Congress(I) candidate from Sadar, Delhi.

"(The) people are the masters and kings. The king can do no wrong."

—Dr. Chenna Reddy, APCC President on the election results.

"I visualize an India in which every Hindu will defend the holy Koran and every Muslim the holy Gita."

—M.J. Akbar, Congress(I) MP from Kishanganj.

"You people walk about hungry and naked while he (Rajiv Gandhi) roams about in a helicopter. How can he know what's going on, on the ground while he is moving about in the sky?"

—Vijayaraje Scindia, BJP MP

"We (Muslim) voters are like 100 gms. If the scales are even, we can make it tilt by hoping out to one side. And this time, we are going with the opposition."

—Ahmed Hussain from Kansli village, Darbhanga in Times of India.

"To sin by silence when one should protest makes cowards of men. Let them who dare, speak and speak again to right the wrongs of men."

—K.Natwar Singh, defeated Union Minister of State for External Affairs on the criminalisation of politics.

"I say tolerance is cowardice. Tolerance has made Hindus impotent. If Ahimsa was truly our religion why do our gods and goddesses carry weapons?"

—Mahant Avaidnath, Hindu Maha Sabha MP from Gorakhpur.

"Had the PM (instead of Sanjay Singh) been injured, would the polling have been allowed to continue? This shows that one man does not have the same rights as another man."

—Rajmohan Gandhi

"I doubt if the new government will last for even two years."

—Sharad Pawar, Maharashtra Chief Minister

"He (V.P. Singh) is very suspicious and gets angry easily but there is no doubt that he has got an understanding of what is honour."

—Konsomolskaya Pravda, Soviet newspaper

"What is V.P. Singh? A mere creation of The Statesman and Indian Express. They are his only supporters."

—Satish Sharma, Rajiv Gandhi aide.

"In Haryana, the wave is against family rule, corruption and nepotism. We will win all ten Lok Sabha seats there and Mr. Devi Lal will lose in all the three constituencies he is contesting from."

—Ghulam Nabi Azad, AICC General Secretary

"My heart beats for India."

—A.B. Vajpayee, BJP leader

Managing Editor
Amrik Singh

General Manager
Lt. Col. Manohar Singh
(Retd.)

Editors
A.S. Narang
Glan Singh Sandhu

Assistant Editor
KH Nazeer (Baiju)

Design
PN Cillex

Business Manager
Onkar Singh Gujral

Publishers
Ekta Trust
2/26, Sarva Priya Vihar
New Delhi 110 016.
Ph. 660738

Editorial, Business
and Circulation Offices
3, Masjid Road, Jangpura
New Delhi 110 014,
Ph. 619284

OUR TIMES



The FORUM Gazette

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The Punjab Tangle

After the victory of the National Front and the visit of VP Singh to Amritsar, it looked as if there was going to be some kind of a breakthrough in Punjab. That has not happened. This may not be a cause for concern but it is certainly a cause for serious disquiet.

The only positive thing that has happened so far in that unfortunate state is the appointment of Nirmal Mukherjee in place of SS Ray. Nirmal Mukherjee is a man with impeccable credentials and an outlook on things which cannot but inspire confidence. After that appointment, however, things seem to have come to a dead end. The all parties conference has only taken a few hesitant steps towards the resolution of the problem. This was not for lack of trying but because the strategy adopted seemed to be flawed and unrealistic. As a spokesman of the Mann group put it, the whole thing had been arranged in the spirit of a seminar rather than a strategy session for solving the problem. What precisely this means requires to be elaborated.

The correct thing would have been to have given some guidelines to the new Governor to get certain things moving. For instance, the Director General of Police remains in position. It may be recalled that, next to the Governor, he was the most important agent of the Centre in that state. While fake encounters are in all probability not taking place any longer, almost everything else remains the same. The whole state apparatus which is still intact is geared to the kind of policy that was laid down by the Centre and quite often even executed from the same source. Those who can recall the circumstances in which Chaman Lal had to leave more than a year ago would recall the details of how it was the Centre which was calling the shots and all that the State administration was doing was to carry out orders.

There are certain things that required to be done and unless those are done promptly and efficiently, the situation on the ground would not take a favourable turn. For instance, is it not necessary to replace the Director General of Police? Is it not advisable that a man like Chaman Lal who enjoyed considerable credibility as a fair man is brought back and given a position which is commensurate with his background and seniority?

What about the innumerable fake encounters that have taken place? Is it not called for that those are enumerated, enquired into and responsibility fixed? What about some of those officials who have had questionable antecedents and whose conduct has been anything but fair and straightforward? To punish them for any offence committed would require their being chargesheeted and all that goes with it. Why are these steps not being taken?

The answer as far as one can judge is that the assumption in Delhi was that the matter would be sorted out with the leaders that have now emerged and some of these things can wait. This is not the right order of priorities to follow. What was discussed at the all parties meeting was on the whole constructive and the only discordant note was struck by the Congress party. That, however, was only to be expected. (No one expects that party to assist in the process of the punishment of those guilty of the 1984 killings. Having organized them in whatever direct or indirect way it might have been done, it successfully evaded any kind of follow up action).

Whether that sense of grievance is well founded or ill-founded is not the issue. Left to himself, Samranjit Singh Mann might have acted differently. But then he has to carry the militants with him. The militants are given to making claims that some people would describe as extravagant. The way to strengthen S S Mann's hands, therefore, is to take those necessary actions which have to be taken and will in any case be taken. The only question on which there is some disagreement is when they are to be taken.

No more need to be said in regard to this issue, for the key to peace and stability in that state is how the people perceive the administration that they have to deal with. Over the years they have perceived it as an agent of tyranny. This image has to change. Unless it is changed, the linkage between crime and terrorism will not end. Certain officials came to be looked upon as symbol of tyranny. The minimum that is required is that they are moved to some other job. Even that has not happened so far. No wonder the general feeling is that people are prepared to trust the new government but the evidence of change is both skimpy and uncertain.

While it is very easy to say that nothing will be done if preconditions are laid down, let it not be overlooked that both the National Front government and S S Mann are hostages to each other. The National Front cannot succeed in Punjab without Mann and Mann cannot provide leadership to the state unless he receives purposeful and positive help from the Centre.

The instrument for that policy should be the Punjab administration headed by the Government and not a forum where different political opinions are expressed and the objectives are identified but no concrete line of action is adopted. By and large, the constituent of the National Front despite some reservations have a broadly similar approach. It is only the Congress Party that speaks in a different voice. Let it do so. But before the National Front can achieve its objectives, the situation has to be changed on the ground and that can be done through action rather than through words.

Rise And Spread Of Terrorism In Punjab

By Lt-Col. Gurcharan Singh (ret'd.)

How the Panjab came to be infested with terrorism is worth examining. If we look back a few years, the first shooting incident took place on 13th April 1978 at Amritsar, when the Neo-Nirankaris, a movement launched against Akalis (i.e. against the Sikhs in fact) and supported by Bharat Sarkar, shot dead a number of Sikhs, followers of Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwala, while on a peace mission. They were on their way to request the Neo-Nirankaris not to denigrate Sikhs and their Gurus and the Guru Granth Sahib. But before they could fulfil their mission, the Neo-Nirankaris fell upon these Sikhs and killed a number of them. A case was registered against these offenders. However, the case was, on the bidding of Bharat Sarkar, transferred to a court outside Panjab; i.e. at Karnal in Haryana where it could be proceeded with according to the wishes of the Bharat Sarkar. That the Neo-Nirankaris had Bharat Sarkar's support was quite clear from the fact that whenever their head visited a foreign country he was accorded treatment of an Indian Ambassador.

As suspected, the case was dismissed and the murderers let off scot-free. This caused great resentment amongst the Sikhs; more so among the members of the Damdami Taksal. This also speaks for the independence of the judiciary in our country. Expecting no justice from the Congress (I) government, Bhindranwala, originally a creation of the Congress (I) itself, planned to avenge the murder of his followers. Neo-Nirankaris became the target—even their head Baba Gurbachan Singh was not spared. Strange! No arrests of the Damdami Taksal men were made either. The government wanted the two sections to fight between themselves and finish each other off. What a national government!

Then came the murder of Lal Jagat Narain, proprietor and editor of the Hind Samachar group of papers, who used to write against Mrs. Indira Gandhi—the Prime Minister of Bharat. No murders could be apprehended, but one person already in the police custody was declared caught while hiding near the place of murder. Naturally, there were no eye-witnesses to the crime, but Sant Bhindranwala was blamed for it. He was arrested at the place and time of his own choosing; i.e. at Chowk Mehta, district Amritsar, where a huge religious congregation had been arranged. Nothing incriminating was found against the Sant, and he was released after a few days.

In this game, top leaders of the

Congress (I), especially from the Panjab, led their respective groups. Their aim being, first, to let each other down, and secondly, work against the Akalis (in fact against the Sikhs) because Mrs. Indira Gandhi had wanted to teach the later a lesson for various reasons. Firstly, it was only the Akali Dal and no other political party, that had started an agitation against the imposition of emergency in the country in 1975, when her throne had started shaking on account of the adverse judgement given by Allahabad High Court. Secondly, the Akalis had supported the Janata Party against the Congress (I) in the 1977 general elections.

A number of killings followed the murder of Lala Jagat Narain: Shri Ramesh Chander (the Lala's son), Sardar A.S. Atwal, D.I.G.; Sardar Harbans Singh Manchanda and so on. But their killers have not been caught so far.

Now the question of Panjab river-waters was raised. To deprive Panjab of the water of its rivers, a Satluj-Yamuna Canal was proposed to carry water to Haryana. The Shromani Akali Dal (S.A.D.) opposed this and started an agitation. The venue was later shifted to the Darbar Sahib, Amritsar. Akalis also asked for the implementation of the Anandpur Sahib Resolution asking for more powers for states. And Akalis were not alone in putting forward this demand. This was demanded nearly by all the non-Congress (I) ruled states.

This suited the machinations of Mrs. Indira Gandhi. She started propaganda that the murderers of the various persons took refuge in the Golden Gurdwara (mistakenly called 'temple'), Amritsar. The Bharat Sarkar even gave a list of 40 such men to the Shromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC). The latter pointed out that out of these some had died and some had gone abroad, thus leaving only 26 such persons behind. Bhindranwala, SGPC and SAD, all naïves, played into the hands of the shrewd Mrs. Indira Gandhi.

Propaganda to the effect was cleverly put across the country and also abroad. The situation had been so created by the Prime Minister and her government that it enabled her to take a stronger step. She deployed about ten divisions of the Indian Army throughout the tiny state of Panjab. Some of these troops had already been trained on Sand Model as to how to assault and capture the Golden Gurdwara at Amritsar. Curfew was imposed throughout the State; no movement was permitted—no vehicle of any type, not even a cycle or bullock-cart was allowed to move about. It seemed that

Bharat Sarkar was thorough briefed by its masters. Golden Gurdwara and a large number of other gurdwaras in Panjab, as even villages, as these had Sikh population, were besieged as these belonged to some foreign country.

Then the Indian Army struck the Sikhs ruthlessly. No consideration was there whether it was male or female, young or old, so long as he/she was a Sikh. Gurdwaras were destroyed, copies of Guru Granth Sahib burnt, Sikhs were killed in thousands, their property looted and the destroyed, Sikh women were raped. Sikh children were branded progeny of serpents and killed. Akal Takht was destroyed by gunfire; there was not a single place or building in the Golden Gurdwara complex that did not receive a bullet or shell. The surviving Sikh youth was put into jail. The Shi Reference Library, a rare gem was burnt to ashes thus depriving the coming Sikh generations of their valuable literature—an irreparable loss. The situation in the districts of Amritsar and Gurdaspur was the worst.

The army acted savagely as it was operating on some foreign soil and against foreigners. Brutalities at the hands of the country's own army committed against part of the country's population has no example in the world history. This was followed by Operation "Woodrose" with similar activities against Sikhs, but this time carried out more thoroughly.

The actions of Mrs. Indira Gandhi gave rise to what she and her government started calling "terrorism". The blood of the Sikh youths boiled and they were up to avenge the disrespect shown to their religion, their religious places and their religious book and their womenfolk.

Now the unexpected happened. On 31 October 1984, Mrs. Indira Gandhi was killed. Her son, with the only qualification of being a Prime Minister's son, was made Prime Minister. Under the new Prime Minister, the Congress (I) party went berserk. The plans to finish off Sikhs were put into execution in Delhi and the Congress (I) ruled States. Thousands of Sikhs were killed in an organised manner—by pouring over them Kerosene oil (a rare commodity those days) or petrol and then putting match to it. The Hindu zealots danced around the burning Sikhs. Again, the Sikh women were raped, the Sikh property looted and then destroyed. This went on for four days in the first week of November 1984, under the very nose of Shri Rajiv Gandhi, but he fiddled with his flute.

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Thorny Path For V.P. Singh

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But the Prime Minister has taken the right step in making a gesture to Sikh sentiments by paying a visit to the Golden Temple at Amritsar. V.P. Singh needs an early break in imposing his stamp on the new government. And if he can begin to resolve the Punjab problem, it would represent a feather in his cap. Having a Muslim Home Minister could also help in Punjab as it would in Jammu and Kashmir.

To an extent, V.P. Singh is seeking to appeal to the people above the heads of his partymen and the constituencies represented by the Bharatiya Janata Party and the two communist parties. Public perceptions of his performance, therefore, hold a central place for him. And this overwhelming compulsion will stand in the way of fulfilling his promise to make Doordarshan and radio non-partisan and free, barring strictly defined taboos.

It cannot be lost upon the Prime Minister that his image-building exercise could lose him the valuable middle class constituency whose influence is far beyond its numbers. The press played a key part in building him up a leader of pre-eminence after he was expelled from the Congress. Rajiv, once eulogized by the press, lost his middle class constituency because he proved politically

incompetent. V.P. Singh could lose the same constituency by failing to deliver on his promise of letting the press be free in every sense and radio and television become non-partisan in nature.

The Chanakya in V.P. Singh has already left several question marks among the middle class. His stated desire not to be Prime

The irony is that the circumstances that brought him to power are loaded with a set of dilemmas that can only be resolved as each of them intrudes into the essential tasks of governance.

Minister and his earlier suggestion that he would be a disaster as one are etched on public memory. The ruse that he was party to in defeating Chandra Shekhar's initial challenge was an ugly reminder of Janata Dal politics. Now that he has assumed office as Prime Minister, his actions will be watched more closely by a middle class in North India until recently

obsessed with getting rid of Rajiv Gandhi's government. It will, in future, be in a less forgiving mood.

In a strange way, Rajiv remains a key to V.P. Singh's future. The opportunistic support given to the National Front government by the BJP and the two Communist parties is dictated by their desire to keep the Congress out of power while savouring their new status in defining the central government's limit of action. These opposition parties' interest is to have Rajiv head the Congress because it forecloses the option of a new centrist party out of splits in the Congress and the Janata Dal.

V.P. Singh has quite a different interest. He was disappointed that his initial effort to attract the bulk of the Congress to his side after his expulsion from the party proved a failure. Now heading a minority government, he is hoping to make another try so that he can liberate himself from his unenviable position, dependent as he is on the self-interest of the BJP and the Communists.

The present situation thus raises more questions than it answers. But these are early days yet for the V.P. Singh government. The irony is that the circumstances that brought him to power are laced with a set of dilemmas that can only be resolved as each of them intrudes into the essential tasks of governance.



To observe the first death anniversary of Safdar Hashmi, SAHMAT is organising the following programme in Delhi.

Day of Resolve

Jan 1, 1990 11a.m.

March from Rabindra Bhavan, New Delhi to Jhandapur, Sahibabad. Jana Natya Manch to perform Natak Jari Hai

Day of Homage

Jan 2, 1990 5.30-7 p.m.

Programme of protest poetry, songs, music and dance, audio-visual presentations. A display of paintings on Safdar, Freedom of Expression and Communal Harmony.

Rabindra Bhavan Lawns

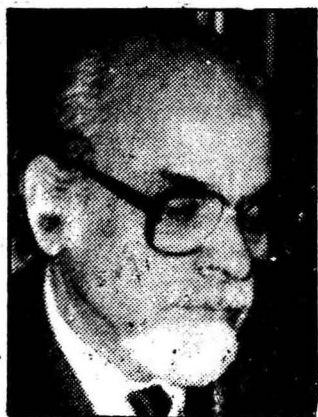
Give Peace A Chance

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cerned with sincerity and sagacity. The consensus paper hopes that the people of Punjab will rise to the occasion, and uphold the glorious traditions of this State (Punjab) in defence of the nation's unity and integrity.

No peace can prevail in the

bleeding State in one go. No government can accept all the demands of any people at once in entirety. What is required is sincere and bold initiatives. The new Government at the Centre and the changed political climate provide some chance for the same. The Akalis must help that not miss the opportunity.



Inder
Kumar
Gujral

ten 'Rajiv Longowal Accord'.

To an audience of 300-strong who participated in the reception, Mr. Gujral promised everything possible to rehabilitate the November 1984 anti-Sikh riot victims. He said that his government would spare no chance to find an early solution to the Punjab tangle. A delighted Gujral later said that he would be obliged to the profound love and affection showered on him by the people of Punjab.

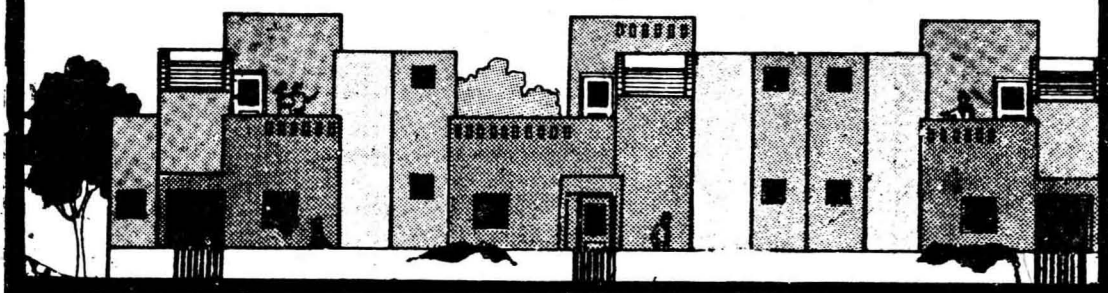
In a reception given to Mr. Inder Kumar Gujral, the Minister Of External Affairs, by the Sikh Forum, for his victory in the Lok Sabha elections, he said that he would be at the forefront in resetting the distorted picture of peace in the Punjab. With an insight into the Punjab imbroglio and its various parameters, Mr. Gujral had contributed a lot to the signing of the now forgot-

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Largest Postal Network In The World

India has the largest postal network in the world. As against around 20,000 post offices at the time of independence, today we have as many as 14 lakh post offices spread all over the country. Indian postal system is also reputed to provide one of the best services in the world.

Out of the total 1,47,377 post offices in the country, 1,31,305 are in the rural areas. Each post office serves on an average, an area of 22.69 sq. km. and a population of 4731. At this level of development, the country is well within the norms adopted by the Universal Postal Union that there should be one post office to serve on an average either an area of between 20 to 30 sq. kms or 3000 to 6000 inhabitants.

Priority Areas

In its efforts to extend postal communications to remote areas, the government has relaxed norms for opening of post offices in the hilly, tribal and backward areas. In such areas, post office is established for a grouped population of 1500 as against 3000 in other areas. The minimum revenue expected is only one third of the running cost. This requirement is further reduced to 15 per cent in the case of hilly, tribal and backward areas.

The seventh plan envisages opening of 6000 new post offices. Such extra-departmental branch offices in villages and departmental post offices required to provide communications support to projects in the State/Central/Joint sectors including townships created under urban development schemes. Unlike most other plan schemes in which the staff component constitutes only a small proportion of the total project cost, the scheme of expansion of postal network is predominantly made up of manpower costs. Even with these constraints, it has been possible to open 3468 new branch post offices and 93 departmental sub-offices till now. The department will open 2500 more post offices in the current year thereby achieving the plan target.

The government is keen to provide basic postal facilities on the widest possible scale both in the urban and rural sectors. For this, the services of departmental and extra-departmental post offices need to be supplemented by establishing secondary levels of service through 'Licensed Postal Agents' and 'Panchayat Dak Sewaks'.

The scheme of 'Panchayat Dak Sewaks' has been started in about 3,000 'Gram Panchayats' in 21

By Girdhar Gomango

districts in 15 states on an experimental basis. Under this scheme, 'Gram Panchayats' are given a monthly grant of Rs. 150 besides a commission on sale of postage stamps and stationery and, asked to appoint their own 'Dak Sewaks' with service linkage with the nearest post office.

Modernization

Of many steps taken to modernize the postal services, popularization of franking machines is very important. A rebate of 3 per cent is being given for its use. 60 high-speed franking machines with a speed of franking 8000 letters per hour have been imported and supplied to the busy post offices in the country.

The postal department has also introduced computers which will provide speedier processing of accounting, data and better services to the people. Similarly, mechanised sorting of mail is being attempted at Bombay.

Domestic 'Speed Post' service, introduced with effect from August 1, 1986 is presently available in 50 cities with 6 extension counters. A new scheme of Domestic Speed Post Money Order Service has also been introduced with effect from May 13, 1988 for remittance of money orders upto Rs. 1000/- ensuring payment to the payee within 24 hours to 72 hours. This facility is available at all the Speed Post Centres in the country.

Other Activities

The Post Office Saving Bank is in fact, one of the biggest banks in the country which operates through the wide network of post offices. The Savings Bank collections have a net balance of Rs. 28, 400 crore. The Postal Life Insurance is yet another major service rendered by the Postal department. It has 14,01,291 policies and a fund balance of Rs. 446/- crore.

On the human resource front, the department is one of the biggest employers in the country. The manpower has been the main asset of the department. It is a widespread network spread throughout the country. It has to depend almost entirely on the capability of the employees. The fact that the Indian Postal System, one of the oldest organized service sectors of the country, withstood the test of time proves that

they have been all through behind the department in all its endeavours.

The department has been doing well in the philatelic field. In order to promote philately as a hobby among the students, it is proposed to open Nehru Stamp Clubs all over the country. Commemorative postage stamps have been brought out on a number of personalities, themes and events. Many more on these themes are to be issued in the forthcoming months.

Public Cooperation

Public cooperation is a must to enable the postal system to discharge its functions more effectively in the fast changing scenario. The composition of mail is rapidly changing with increasing industrialization and commercial activities. Posting of mail in bulk numbering a few lakhs at a time has now become very common. Obviously, a post office, which is geared to handle a few thousand articles cannot dispose of a lakh or so articles when presented suddenly. The problem of such bulk posting can be greatly reduced by public cooperation, if the senders could arrange the mail in the order of PIN Code for speedier operation through computerized mailing list. Even in other cases if the mail could be bundled statewide, district-wise and even city-wise it would greatly help in disposal of the mail quickly.

Persons who receive large volume of daily mail can help themselves and the post office by hiring a post box. A post bag hired along with the post box also enables the receipt of the mail safely at the addressee's premises and it can also be used to send the mail for posting.

The residents of the multi-storeyed buildings can help by installing mail boxes on the ground floor. This will help the postman to distribute mail speedily.

The most important way by which the public can help the department is by writing the address legibly and fully with the PIN Code. Writing the sender's address also is very useful because the sender can include the PIN Code in his correspondence and his correspondents would then automatically start using the PIN Code while writing back. The use of PIN codes in letter heads, covers having printed address, rubber stamps, etc would enable others to know the correct address with PIN Code and use it in their correspondence. The spirit should be to help the department to serve us better.

PIB

MAHA KIRTAN DARBARS

The Sikh Seva Dal, a youth wing of the Sikhs in Poona, has been organizing 'Kirtan Darbars' for the last five years. This year also this devoted youth organization, which is determined to spread love and peace for mankind, is arranging 'Kirtan Darbars' from December 22 to 24.

Tens of thousands of people from different communities participate in the 'Kirtan Darbars' held yearly in Pune for the last five years. Last year, it recorded an attendance of more than 50,000 heads in the three-day prayers. People of all religions, castes and class participate in the 'Kirtan Darbars' and the free kitchen (Guru ka langar) arranged on all these days.

This season also the organizers expect the number of participants to cross all previous records. The programme would be held at Tilak Ayurvedic College Hostel Ground behind the Cycle Society, Quarter Gate, Pune 411 011. Those who are interested can obtain more information from the office of the Sikh Seva Dal, 24/25 Somwar Peth, Pune 411 011. Phones: 24417, 24430 and 21897.

PREET MANDIR (HOPE FOR ABANDONED CHILDREN)

Preet Mandir complete 10 years of dedicated service to the nation's destitute children on January 16, 1989. It was registered in 1979 as the BALWANT KAUR ANAND MEMORIAL WELFARE SOCIETY, in the fond memory of the wife of Shri K. S. Anand, founder-President of the project. Its mission is to mitigate the suffering of infants in distress, of any caste or race.

ACTIVITIES:

Child Welfare:- There are a number of schemes in the five year plans for destitute children and allotments and aids for their implementation. There is also a network of voluntary agencies involved in the welfare activities for needy children. Even though considerable work has been done in India in this field much remains to be done still, considering the gravity of the problem and the mass of population in our country. We, in Preet Mandir, hope to contribute our little mite towards solving these problems. Our activities have received recognition from the Central and State Govts. Even the Income Tax Dept. by exemption granted under Sec. 80 (G) of the Income Tax Act.

Adoption:- Preet Mandir is a home, temporary though it may be, for nurturing children and destitute babies upto the age of three. The Management constantly looks for adoptive homes where the very young children may be placed. So far Preet Mandir has succeeded in acquiring homes for 200 children, the majority of whom have been adopted with families in this country. Occasionally a family from abroad adopts a child, usually handicapped are not accepted by Indian parents. Experience has shown that Indian families do not care to take children that are handicapped whereas foreigners do.

Funds:- This is a voluntary organisation which originally began with private funds made available by Mr. K.S. Anand. The present magnitude of the work and the expanding volume of the worksphere is from volunteers and voluntary organisations, funding agencies and Government sources, while the Government assistance is very small we mostly depend on voluntary assistance. We look forward to philanthropic individuals, organisations and friends appreciating the noble work done at Preet Mandir to come forward and extend a helping hand to carry on the work humbly begun by the individuals. Raising of funds for such a cause may not be a problem if friends and voluntary forces come together to arrange the same for this organisation.

A visit to Preet Mandir, whenever possible for you is solicited for receiving the blessings of the children of Preet Mandir and also to receive God's blessings.

By Bharat Dogra

After the biggest-ever industrial disaster at Bhopal in December, 1984, there has been lot of activity on the part of the authorities to collect information on hazardous industries, and to improve the organizational set up for ensuring better industrial safety.

The Ministry of Environment has been busy preparing a data bank of all hazardous chemicals in the country, to be made available to every district which has a hazardous industry. The Ministry has also set up a central crisis group which coordinates the work of two or more states and centre in management of any serious mishap whenever such need arises. This group will also function as an apex body for laying down policies and providing expert guidance for handling major disasters.

A four-year ILO aided project known as 'Establishment and initial operation of major accident hazards control system' was started in 1986. The project makes available international experts for help in this area. It also aims to strengthen Central Labour Institute (at Bombay) and regional labour institutes (at Calcutta, Kanpur and Madras) for work on industrial safety.

The Union Labour Ministry prepared a Safety and Health Accident Reaction Plan (SAHARA) aimed at, among other things, strengthening state factory inspectorates, setting up industrial hygiene labs, and forming safety committees, in factories.

Recently six labs of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) collaborated in an interdisciplinary effort for preparation of a report on the hazard and risk analysis of the Hazira Gas Processing Complex.

Some time back a 'safety audit' was ordered for all oil installations in the country, particularly in onshore and offshore drilling rigs.

The Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas recently told the Parliamentary Consultative Committee that the entire aspect of safety in the oil industry, including drilling and production of oil and gas, is being brought under the Oil Industry Safety Directorate.

Despite this, the fact remains that industrial accidents have been reported at regular intervals during the last five years in the post-Bhopal phase, and in the case of several of these, faulty practices related to the safety aspect have been highlighted, and several of these could potentially have been much bigger tragedies but for chance factors or the valour and timely actions of some individuals.

On November 9, 1988 a fire in Bharat Petroleum Refinery at Mahul, Bombay took 32 lives. The courage and timely action of four workers prevented this from turning it into a much bigger catastrophe, while a faulty maintenance of critical equipment during a routine shut-down has been pointed out as a likely factor behind this

mishap.

On October 22, 1988, a fire in a plastic factory located in the premises of a cold storage in Lawrence Road (Delhi) resulted in the death of 25 persons and injuries to at least 50 others. A few days later on November 13, another fire accident in a chemical factory in the same area took the life of one person while four others were injured.

On May 5, 1989 in Rithala village of Delhi, at least 3 persons were killed and nine injured in a big explosion that blasted an under-construction waste treatment plant.

In 1985, there were two chlorine gas leaks in Calcutta within a span of 24 hrs. On 11th June, chlorine gas leaked from Mullickghat pumping station of the Calcutta Municipal corporation. One person died and 32 others fell ill. The Minister for Urban Development Mr. Prashanta Sur said this leak could have resulted in a bigger disaster. A similar leakage occurred at the Calcutta Metropolitan Development Authority's booster pumping station at Auckland Place, in South Calcutta. Again a major disaster was avoided by timely remedial action.

In 1985, ammonia gas leaked from a big fertilizer factory, the Rastriya Chemicals and Fertilisers Ltd., located in Chembur region of Bombay causing wide spread panic. Poor safety conditions in this factory have been well documented.

In 1985, there was a chlorine gas leak in the caustic soda unit of the Kotharis in Madras, creating panic among the people in parts of this metropolitan city as they suffered from eye irritation, congestion in the chest and nausea. Several of them had to be hospitalized.

Sometime back three persons, including a geologist of the Oil and Natural Gas Commission (ONGC) were killed following a blow-out at a jack-up rig on contract with the ONGC in the Daman off shore area. Fortunately, 54 of the 57 people on the rig could be rescued.

On March 23, 1988, a major fire started in Central Ordnance Depot in Jabalpur which continued to rock the city for three days. Two magazines (ammunition godowns) were blown up. Major loss of human life could be avoided, in fact only 10 persons were injured although the huge explosions had the capacity of a much bigger tragedy.

On August 30, 1985, one of the three tanks which store chlorine at the chamber (Bombay) based plant of Calico Industries began to leak. One employee died while about a hundred other persons had to be hospitalized. Earlier an experts committee which examined the safety aspects of this plant had warned, "The highly corroded valves, pipelines and storage vessels in caustic soda and the chlorine plant need to be replaced immediately. The plant is not safe to operate in the present condition", what is more the Bombay Municipal corporation had not renewed its

Can Bhopal H

licence since 1979 for failing to comply with fire brigade stipulations.

At a cloth mill in Gwalior, 16 people were seriously injured when chlorine gas leaked.

Two workers died and a chemist fell after inhaling poisonous gas at a chemical factory at Rudeli Village in Gujarat's Kaira district.

Between January 1985 and March 30, 1987 there were 79 recorded gas leaks in India.

On December 4, 1985 (the day after the first anniversary of Bhopal disaster) a massive gas leak from Sri Ram Food and Fertilizer Industries (SFFI) complex in Delhi led to widespread panic among people, and several harmful manifestation of the impact of gas. Over 700 people were hospitalized and at least two of them died within the next fortnight. The gas leak was caused by a collapse of a tank of oleum, spilling tons of acid, which reacted with water (large quantities of which were sprayed on it, indicating the lack of training to fight emergencies) to form a dense cloud of harmful gases.

This, moreover, was only one of the several other mishaps which have already taken place at SFFI.

On December 17, 1982, 40 school children fell ill, in fact some became unconscious, while walking near a place where SFFI discharges its effluents.

On September 10, 1985 a leak from the sulphuric acid plant affected several hundred residents in nearby colonies.

Two days after the widespread scare and mass hospitalization on Dec. 4, 1985, there was another leak at the sulphuric acid plant of SFFI.

This aspect of SFFI is very similar to Union Carbide in Bhopal a spate of smaller incidents taking place one after another, complaints being made against these to the authorities, these being ignored and covered up and meanwhile the potential of a major tragedy continuing to exist all along. If in Bhopal this risk was provided by the big storage of MIC gas, in SFFI this exists because of the big if somewhat reduced storage of the deadly chlorine gas.

Ashish Kothari, a leading activist of 'Kalpavriksha' environment group, which has made a thorough study of SFFI's hazards, has written on the basis of this study (Economic & Political Weekly), "Each of the expert committees which has looked at the caustic soda plant have stated that the result of such a leak would be catastrophic, several thousand people may die or be permanently maimed, and several lakh could be affected in varying degrees and the possibility of such a leak occurring has not been far from remote, as has been repeatedly pointed out, safety conditions and emergency inadequate. According to another researcher Ashok Bharati, who has studied this factory's hazards in



Hungry for Justice: Thousand of protesters gathered beneath the banner outside the Supreme Court on 25 August, 1989 in support of their demand for a

depth, the maintenance record of this unit has contractors to save costs and evade responsibility.

According to a note written by Miss Neeta Bali, former Secretary (Labour) Delhi Administration, "the only effective method to guarantee the safety of the people living in the adjoining locality is the relocation of the unit from the existing area". But this advice has not been followed up so far, despite the fact that it has been supported by several concerned persons and groups. Instead, the official who wrote this note was soon transferred.

SFFI has continued to make news for its accident potential. Recently another panic situation was created due to the leakage of harmful gas from the cylinders transported by it.

Risk from transport of hazardous materials is considerably increased in India due to callous neglect of safety norms frequently shown by industries, including use of untrained and ill-informed drivers who are themselves not aware of the full hazardous nature of the cargo carried by them, the movement of these vehicles through several crowded and accident-prone areas, and the ignorance as well as lack of preparation to deal with emergencies involving hazardous cargo.

In May 1986, an oil tanker

exploded in Nasik, spilling 200 litres of oil and killing nine persons and injuring 27.

Several school children had to be rushed for medical treatment, when a driver driving a leaking tanker carrying chlorine thoughtlessly abandoned it near a school in Bombay.

Oleum leak from an overturned tanker in Baroda led to the spread of acid fumes and panic among a large section of the population. Four persons were seriously injured.

A fire in a leaking oil tanker led to 39 people being charred to death in Karnataka.

In Moti Nagar P.S. area in West Delhi, a tanker carrying acid started leaking and in the existing efforts to plug this leak, three persons were injured and several others were affected by acid fumes.

Recently, in Goa, a truck carrying six one-ton cylinders of liquid chlorine to a pesticide plant collided with a bus and fell into a ditch. Two cylinders developed leaks. The driver ran away after shouting some warnings which could not be understood by local villagers. Some people fell unconscious, others were affected by nausea and dizziness. Nearly 80 people were affected, several of them seriously.

This tragedy drew attention to

appen Again?



the Bhopal Gas Peedlth Sangarsh Sahyog Samiti and demonstrated out-
view of the settlement between Union Carbide and the Indian Government:

the hazardous conditions under which chlorine is transported to Goa. It was pointed out that Goa receives 1,000 such cylinders from Farwar every month. Similarly the regular transport of ammonia from Maharashtra to Goa based Zuari Agro Chemicals takes place in hazardous conditions. Tankers deliver 120 tonnes of ammonia per day, travelling on uneven, narrow and curved roads.

In Bombay, a 12-member committee headed by R.K. Garg, the Environmental Safety Committee, was asked to identify hazardous industries and investigate their safety aspects. Serious shortcomings in safety measures were found in most industrial units examined by this committee, including such well-known companies as Ciba Geigy Ltd., Indian Explosives Ltd., Hindustan Lever Ltd., Burroughs Wellcome Co. Ltd. and Rashtriya chemicals and Fertilisers (RCF).

Apart from lack of adequate monitoring of various pollutants and hazardous gas, the committee found in the case of RCF that operators are not trained to cope with abnormal situations, safety valves level indicators and pressure indicators in the ammonia, methanol, methylamine and sulphuric acid tanks were either in a corroded condition or were not functioning properly; the control

panel for the old nitric acid plant revealed faulty alarms and the ammonia storage tank was corroded.

At the Burrough Wellcome and Co. (India) Ltd., the committee found that there was no effluent treatment plant, many chemicals and solvents were stored in the open with no adequate water spraying arrangement, phosgene cylinders were kept on the naked floor with inadequate ventilation of the store-room, phosgene concentration was not being adequately monitored in the working area, the pipe that connected the phosgene reactor to the scrubber was made of fragile glass.

Indian Explosives Ltd. was found to be storing butanol and methanol in a non-flame proof area in the factory. In the case of Bombay Soap factory a dangerous chemical, hexane, had been stored in too large quantities and the plant location itself was unsafe and contrary to existing rules.

In Ahmed Oil Mills it was noticed that in the existing conditions any ammonia leak could not be controlled and workers lacked safety training.

In Excel Industries Ltd. it was found that chlorine gas leaks from the absorption tower of the plant, the floor of the oxalic acid plant is wooden and benzene is not stored as stipulated in the licence.

The Antop Hill Warehousing Corporation, Rs. 34 crore project promoted by the Indian Merchant Chamber as a large scale storage facility for 'hazardous' and 'extra hazardous' chemicals has been under construction in the heart of Bombay city. Ironically, a project which has been ostensibly promoted with the aim of reducing hazards of existing storage practices for chemicals has faced increased and quite well-argued criticism for increasing these hazards. A cover-story on this subject in *Business India* has argued very rightly that the planning of this project has ignored a crucial factor, the danger of violent reactions occurring between stored chemicals; i.e. the problem of chemical incompatibilities and affinities. According to Arun Subramanian, who wrote this *Business India* story and has specialised in hazards related issues, "Every single element that combined to produce the horror of Bhopal is present in the Antop Hill venture—large quantities of highly volatile materials, insufficient care in storing the materials, inadequate safety precautions and a large neighbouring community at risk."

In Kanpur over one hundred factories, officially described as 'highly dangerous' are located in a small area on the northern part of the city having a population of about four lakhs. A major fire here can start a series of explosions which can pose a grave threat to the city's three million population. The industries include a sprawling ordnance factory, a smaller arms factory, a field gun factory, and an ammunition testing range, a fertilisers plant with big naphtha storages—these and a host of other industries squeezed into this area are known for their stocks of combustible and explosive materials. Despite this grave threat, fire fighting equipment has been found to be highly inadequate. Major fires have already been reported from the fertiliser and the ordnance factories during the last decade or so.

Baroda, a big city of Gujarat with a population of nearly 10 lakhs, has the country's heaviest concentration of heavy petrochemicals industry, added to which are large number of small and medium units. A mishap in one part of this conglomeration runs a high risk of spreading fast and unleashing a chain reaction. Several mishaps which narrowly missed becoming major disasters have been already reported, while pollution levels are known to be high. Reports on this industrial concentration have drawn attention to serious negligence and failure on the part of pollution control authorities.

According to recent news reports, residents of Sangrur, a town in Punjab, are demanding the shifting of an insecticide man-

ufacturing factory belonging to an influential political leader to some safer place, far from the city. This factory recently started the production of monocrotophos, an insecticide. While highly hazardous chemicals are being used, a news report (*The Tribune* May 1, 1989) says, the factory has not taken the minimum required steps to control pollution. This factory is surrounded by residential houses, an army establishment and a milk plant.

According to report of *Jansatta* (June 2, 1987) a company named 'the Cyanide and Pigment Ltd., has changed its name to Tata pigments Ltd.', but this has not helped to remove people's apprehensions regarding the threat posed by this unit to their safety. According to this report, the people of Jamshedpur town face serious safety threat from the gases stored and used in TATA iron and Steel Company (TISCO) and the company named above. Several workers face health problems from time to time due to high gas exposures.

Frequent gas leaks from Shivali Chemicals Ltd., a pesticides factory located in a village near Premnagar locality of Dehradun city, had exposed the neighbouring population to breathing problems, giddiness, vomiting and impaired vision. Several workers employed here are also reported to have had bouts of unconsciousness, apart from the more frequent feeling of giddiness. Published reports have drawn attention to the highly precarious and dangerous conditions in factory's premises. After the Bhopal disaster emergency response warnings relative to this factory were published in newspapers. This factory was officially identified as a high hazard factory. Work here has been stopped for sometime.

A report prepared by the safety equipment maintenance division of the ONGC revealed that out of the 80 production platforms which require five protection systems, on 16 platforms these systems had not been commissioned while in 16 others fire water pumps were out of order in various stages of repair. Several life boats were also awaiting repairs, without standbys having been provided. Further, the multiplicity of the various makes of safety systems had made it difficult to ensure their functional reliabilities.

Sunday magazine reported (28 July-3 Aug. 1985 issue), "The task force of the Gujarat government has identified 25 hazardous chemical plants, producing hydrocyanic acid, chlorine carbon monoxide, ammonia, nitrobenzene and phosphorus components. After scrutinizing the conditions under which these chemicals are produced, some industries were termed "extremely hazardous for surrounding population and environment. However, the same report also said" In spite of eight minor accidents in chemical and allied units in the past year, the state government has failed to take deterrent steps against the industrialists and officials who

have permitted flagrant violations of the labour laws."

Soon after the Bhopal gas tragedy the Gujarat government had constituted a task force under the chairmanship of Mr. J.J. Mehta to oversee safety measures in various industries dealing in hazardous and toxic materials. The state govt. also appointed an empowered committee in November 1985 to implement the suggestions of the task force. However, the recommendations of both the bodies were not implemented for a long time.

This led the Consumer Education and Research Society (CERS) to file a writ petition in the High Court to demand the implementation of these recommendations and the shifting of highly hazardous and toxic industries from thickly populated areas to outskirts. The petition said instructions should also be issued to 21 big industrial units in the state of disclose information regarding dangers, including health hazards, to those employed by the unit or living in vicinity. In October, 1988 the Gujarat High Court issued notices to the central, the state governments and others for implementation of the J.J. Mehta Task Force and the empowered committee recommendations.

While describing the new classification system of the Madhya Pradesh government for hazardous industries, the *Indian Express* reported (December 13, 1988), "Reports about environmental mishaps caused by the pharmaceutical unit owned by Ajitabh Bachan in Ratlam district and by the chemical unit controlled by the Congress-I, M.P. Mr. Pratap Bhanu Sharma, in Vidisha have been conveniently ignored.

Thus it appears that the post-Bhopal consciousness of the authorities regarding industrial hazards is confined more to gathering information and appointing expert committees than real action aimed at protecting the lives of people from such threats and punishing those responsible for the existence of such threatening conditions. It may be easy to talk of such strict action, but when such action runs up against the profits of vested economic interests, and their links in the political and administrative set up it is not difficult to understand why such action seldom gets properly implemented in the existing conditions of our country. There is a big collusion of industries with administrative and political interests to cover up the exploitation of workers, environmental damage and threat to safety. Till this collusion remains, strong action to improve industrial safety may be more preached than implemented. Keeping in view how little we know about the various hazardous chemicals and processes being used in various industries, even the limited information and documentation undertaken in the post-Bhopal phase is a significant step forward, but this by itself cannot be adequate to make the safety record of our industries a credible one.

(N.F.S. INDIA)

X' Mas: A Two-Millennium-Old Message

By Rev. Fr. George

The gospels describe many incidents through which Jesus Christ teaches us how to improve our relationship with other human beings. So much joy we could give to others if only we were a little more thoughtful.

Once, when Jesus was on a mountain, praying, he was so transformed by God's grace that his face shone like the sun, and his garments became glisteningly white. His disciples were frightened and fell prostrate on the ground. But "Jesus came toward them and laying his hands on them said, "get up, do not be afraid." (Mt. 17, 1-8). Of interest here is the short phrase, "laying his hands on them". We can only guess at the sense of peace which flowed through the disciples after their loving Master touched them.

Jesus 'touched' many men, women and children during his all too brief ministry of three years. Mathew recounts how Jesus healed repulsive leper by touching and commanding him to be cured (8,1-4). John and Mathew both report how Jesus cured blind men after touching them. But Luke tells one of the most memorable stories concerning Jesus' sensitivity to others (8,40-48). He was going to the house of a man named Jairus. On the way there, he was in a

large crowd pressed by many people on all sides. A woman who had been bleeding for twelve years came up behind him and brushed the edge of his shirt. Her bleeding stopped immediately. But then, Jesus asked, "who touched me?" Imagine the dismay of Peter at this question. He made the obvious reply, "Lord, the crowds are milling and pressing around you!" The woman finally came forth trembling and admitted to touching Jesus. She told the crowd what happened and how she had been cured instantly. Jesus dismissed her after saying that her faith had cured her. What is more interesting about this story is the way Jesus was aware of just one person in the midst of many, many who were trying to get at him merely to touch so charismatic a man.

Jesus also used 'eye contact' very effectively. What kind of love and forgiveness must have been in the eyes of Jesus when he sadly looked at his closest friend Peter who had just denied knowing him that he "went out and wept bitterly" (22,61). Not a word was spoken as Jesus' eyes met those of Peter. By one glance, Jesus awakened in Peter profound repentance for a pitiable act of betrayal.

The Bible is loaded with exam-




Jesus went about with the poor, and this upset the rich. But he was also seen eating with the rich, for they were not excluded from his love. And most reprehensible of all to the leaders of his day was his mingling with all kinds of sinners. But Jesus justified himself with these words, "A physician comes to heal the sick, not the well."

ples of Jesus' loving concern for individuals. One of the most touching scenes of all concerns a sinful woman who broke into the house of Simon the Pharisee to anoint Jesus' feet and cry for forgiveness (Lk. 7, 36-50). The Pharisee thought ugly thoughts about her, condemning her and condemning Jesus for associating with her. But Jesus, who knew the agony of her soul, reached out, forgave her and told her to leave and sin no more.

This scene reminds us of his acceptance of the woman caught in adultery (Jn. 8, 1-8). Here was a known sinner caught in the act and brought before Jesus by the Scribes and Pharisees. The Jewish law ordered such women to be stoned. Jesus spoke up for her at the risk of further angering his enemies. Boldly he proclaimed, "Let the man among you who has no sin be the first to cast a stone on her." When he began

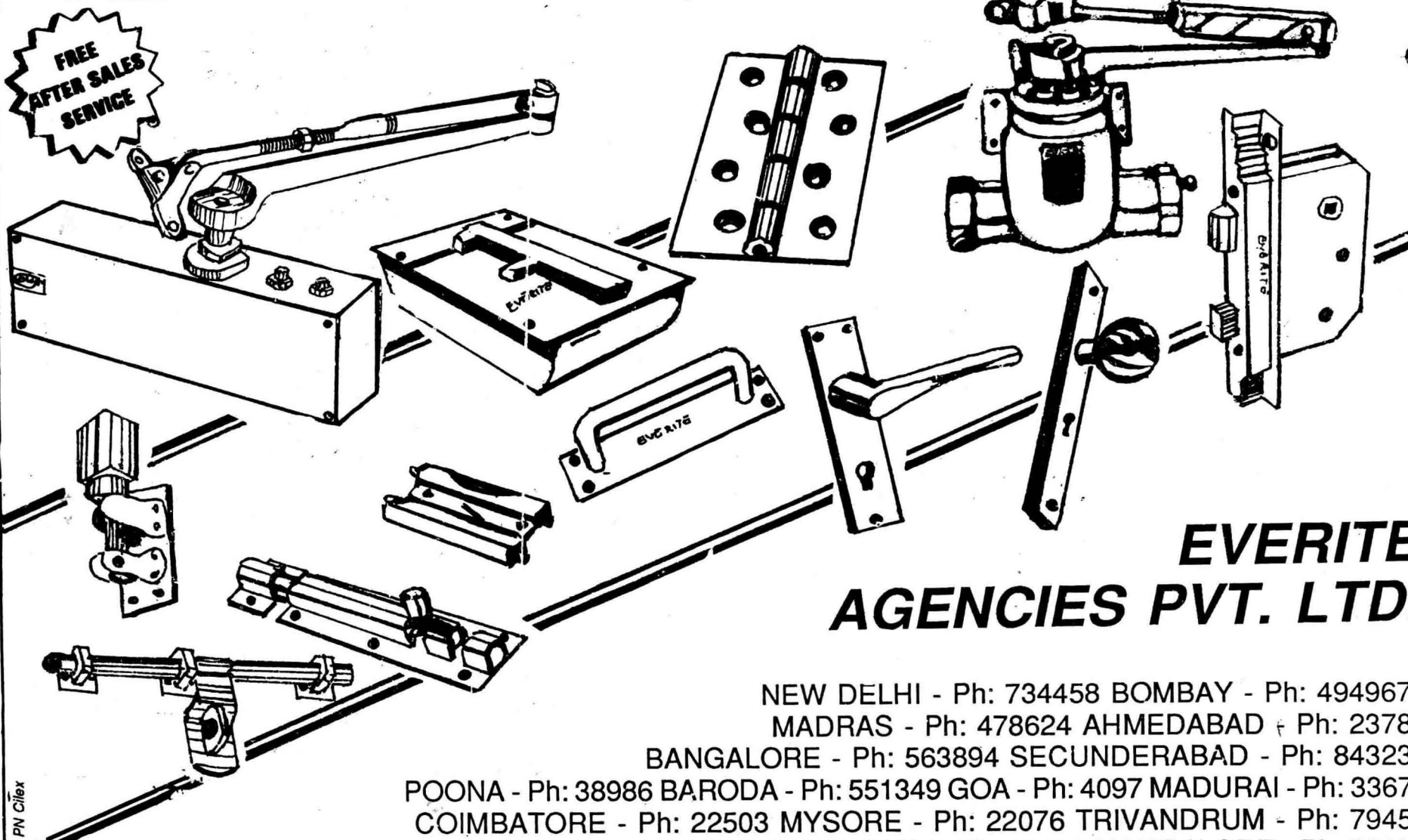
to write on the ground with his finger, her accusers with great shame turned away and withdrew. With great love and tenderness Jesus turned towards her and told her to be on her way admonishing her to sin no more.

His mercy also extended to another kind of persons. He was known as a 'friend of sinners'. He was known as one who associated with all kinds of people. It was taboo to go near a leper for fear of infection. Jesus not only went near lepers, but he overcame his natural human revulsion to vile upon sores and to embrace those poor wretches. No respectable Jew would associate with the hated tax collectors who cooperated with the Roman occupation forces, but Jesus accepted dinner invitations from them and won some of them over, even numbering one of them as an apostle. It was considered very bad manners for men to speak to women in public because of the fear of public scandal. Jesus not only spoke to them but even to women who were hated Samaritans. Besides, some women were among the closest of his followers, women like Mary and Martha, and the reformed sinner, Mary Magdala. Furthermore, he went about with the poor, and this upset the rich. But he was also seen eating with the rich, for they were not excluded from his love. And most reprehensible of all to the leaders of his day was his mingling with all kinds of sinners. But Jesus justified himself with the words, "A physician comes to heal the sick, not the well."



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In devotion To Guru Gobind Singh On His Birthday Perpetual Kingdom Of The Pure

By Bhagwant Singh Dalawar,

When someone talks of Khalistan, I am startled to ask: which Khalistan?

When Khalistan is projected with violence and hatred, I am alarmed to question: Do you know what Khalsa stands for? And when in the name of Guru Gobind Singh, the self-seeking Sikh leaders, the Manmukh Kursi-oriented politicians and pseudo-religious hoodwinkers, exploit the Sikh youth and the Sikh masses in throwing them away deeper and deeper into the quagmire of the dirtiest ways of smearing the Community, I begin to pray to Guru Gobind Singh to save us from these so-called guides whose sole motto is: Self Before Service.

Khalsa is pure. Khalsa is free and Khalsa is always at the helm. How come, today, we are in shambles, not only because of the unprincipled, falsehood-drenched rulers but also because of the selfish, uninformed, petty Sikh politicians and leaders who have brought the community to this level. But nothing is lost, if we, even now understand what Guru Gobind Singh wanted us to do and work for. Khalsa is born to rule but what is that rule? But the field of the Khalsa is entirely different from the field of those who, drenched in materialism, are prepared to sell their soul. Khalsa rules in his heart and spreads love throughout the world, not as a hoodwinking exercise but as the true *Roop* of Guru Gobind Singh whom he always keeps in his heart.

Khalsa Mero Rop Hai
Khaas
Khalse Mein Hown Karoun
Niwas.
(Says Guru Gobind Singh:
Khalsa is my proper and
real representation and I
live in the Khalsa)

Having strayed away from this basic premise of having and realizing the presence of Guru Gobind Singh in our hearts, we have befooled ourselves to believe AK-47 guns or internecine warfare both within the community and within the nation or killing innocents in return for the killing of innocents in State terrorism. The tenets of Sikhism are clear. No innocent will be killed irrespective of degeneration of the State. Once, it is stated, when the Sikhs asked Guru Gobind Singh why they were not allowed to perpetrate indignities on the Muslims and their women, when our own brothers and sisters were harassed, tortured and raped by them when they were in a position to do so, the Guru replied: "Mein Twanu Uchha Lai Jauna Chahunda Han—I wish to raise you high up". And, for that reason, the Guru would not permit degeneration among the Sikhs, if others were degenerated. Indeed, the tyranny would be met at all costs



but innocents would not be made the victims of Sikhs response. This is the Kingdom of the Khalsa.

The Khalsa is not subject to the rules of the world which govern worldly responses. Khalsa is pure and Guru Gobind Singh says: "The Khalsa is the one in whom the light of the Lord burns ceaselessly. If that is not there, do not regard him as Khalsa; in fact, he is impure." Because of the dictates of our masters, Khalsa is always ruling. That rule is not subject to any grant from others, not subject to jealousy or competition by others. The Khalsa Raj is in the heart of the khalsa (the Kingdom of God is within you) and is granted by the grace of Guru and grace of God. When Khalsa realizes the presence of his Guru within his heart, he is liberated.

Look at the avenues for the Khalsa to reign supreme not only in his heart but also in the world so long as he keeps the majesty of Guru Gobind Singh, the defiance of the mighty rulers against all odds and the adherence to righteousness in all circumstances as his ideals. Let me quote some invaluable passages from Guru Granth Sahib to proclaim the Kingdom that Guru Granth Sahib assures the Kha'sa. Here is the love-drenched intimate relation-

ship from a Bhakta:

Jaupe Ham Na Paap Kar-
anta Aye Ananta
Patit Pawan Naam Kaise
Hunta.
(If I were not sinning, Oh
Limitless One, my Lord,
How could you acquire the
name of "Patit Pawan"; i.e.
the lifter of the fallen)

The grace contained in these

verses is enough to witness not only the glory of our Masters as Sikh Gurus but also to feel the warmth of humanitarian universality for the Bhaktas's word in Guru Granth Sahib carries the same validity, the same esteem, the same music, the same magic for the ears and the hearts of Sikhs. Again, isn't it the Maharashtrian Saint, Naamdev, totally oblivious to the honours of the world, when he says:

Jau Raaj Dehn Tan Kaun
Vadi
Bhikh Mangaen Tau Kya
Ghat Jai
(If you set up a kingdom for
me to rule, what honour can
it mean for me? And if you
make me a beggar, what do
I lose?)

How can a Sikh then ever be less than an Emperor in his own right and why can't he feel that Raj Karega Khalsa is here and now manifested in the Guru's words of liberation. That is why Kabir says: Jo Sukh Prabh Gobind Ki Seva So Sukh Raaj Na Lahiye (The peace that reigns in the service of the Lord cannot be attained even in the rulers, kingdoms). Who would then even in dreams think of a petty kingdom of the world in preference to the feet of the Lord?

Satgur Sikh Ke Bandhan Kaate.
Guru Granth Sahib is capable of cutting up all fetters of the Khalsa. In these circumstances, the Khalsa proclaims in the words of his Guru as follows:

Naam Tere Ki Jot Lagai
Bhayo Ujira Bhavan
Saglare
(In worshipping You, my
Lord, I light the lamp of your
name and I find that the
whole world is in floodlight)

The Sikh has so much confidence, so much faith and so much deter-

mination to live by that faith that he says without hesitation:

Sadhsang Upje Biswas
Antar Bahar Sada Parkash
(It is in satsangat that one
develops faith and on
account of this faith, there
is light both inside and out-
side.)

I consider this light as the permanent mark of everlasting Kingdom that Gurus have envisaged for a Sikh. It is only a matter of regret that the Sikh has forgotten the light and that is why even the so-called Sikh religious and political leaders are rotting in the darkness of material attachments.

The masterpiece of the Sikh's liberation comes from his Guru's own liberation which he has already assured through Khalsa Merc Roop hai KHAAS.

Here is Guru Arjun's open love affair with the Lord and concealed therein is love affair of the Sikh with the Guru.

Neither the Lord dies, nor am I afraid; neither He can be destroyed, nor am I irritated; neither is He moneyless nor can I be hungry; neither He is in pain, nor do I feel any pain. there is no one other than the Lord who can kill and He is the one who gives us life. He is not bound in any way, nor am I bound. He is not entrenched in worldliness, nor am I. He is not worried, nor do I have any worry. He is not hungry and I am free from Trishna (hankering). When He is clean, I, too, took like that. Because I am nothing, It is only He and He alone who exists.

The problem with the Sikhs, as perhaps with adherents of other religions is that they go by the external symbols or they just read the texts. As a matter of fact the grace is not only sublime and great but also practicable. And what they intended for the Sikhs was that they should be able to walk in the footsteps of the Gurus and use the same track. The track will not

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Discover the love of
young generation



Rise And Spread Of Terrorism In Punjab

Continued from page 3

The helpless Sikhs were put into ad-hoc camps with no adequate administrative arrangements. After a few days they were forcibly evicted from these camps and left to fend for themselves. This state-terrorism combined with Operation Blue Star and Operation Woodrose, gave further flip to the outraged Sikh youth that was left alive. Thus came into existence terrorism in Punjab.

The killers of Sikhs, identified by the various organisations were let off; no action was taken against them, instead they were given promotions and even made ministers as a reward for the good (!) deed done.

The terrorists in Punjab have killed both Sikhs and Hindus; according to reports, the Sikhs killed by terrorists outnumber Hindus. That in Amritsar district alone, out of 109 persons killed from 1 May to 31 July 1987, 65 were Sikhs and 44 Hindus. (*Indian Express*, 28 Aug 87.) But the government is equally guilty with the only difference that for the state terrorism Sikhs alone are the target. This way the terrorists are more secular than the so-called secular Bharat Sarkar.

The terrorists come on vehicles, motor-cycles, scooters, even on cycles and on foot, carry out their dastardly act; i.e. kill innocent people and disappear. No one is apprehended. Where do they go? And what happens to the transport

they use. The reasonable answer could be that they merge with the public, and the public out of fear or even sympathy one could say, do not take any step against them. Why? Because the public has lost faith in the Sarkar. The word of the Prime Minister cannot be trusted. The public is also aware of the fact that the Government is incapable of protecting them and their property from the depredations of the so-called terrorists. Even the government agencies, meant for the protection of the public have become ineffective.

If the victims happen to be Sikhs, nothing happens; this is taken for granted that a Sikh is to be killed! Not even a word of sympathy is uttered by any member of the majority community. But the reaction is very strong in case a Hindu is killed: whole of the Hindi-zone (the real Bharat) flares up, the newspapers splash the news in bold letters, editorials are written as if the sky is going to fall. Political leaders of all parties issue statements (the only thing they are good at) condemning the "dastardly", "cowardly" act. (As if their acts of June and November 1984 were acts of chivalry!) The State government concerned announces compensation to the families of the victims. Whether these amounts are paid to the persons concerned afterwards cannot be said.

Police and para military forces

become active, posts are strengthened, exits are blocked, barriers are erected, innocent Sikhs are arrested. In harassing the Sikhs, the Central Reserve Police Force men are most notorious. A turban is a red rag to them.

Bandhs are also called mostly in the Hindi-zone; in Punjab these are confined to cities and towns as the Hindus form a majority here. These bandhs as a rule are violent: Sikhs are killed, their property destroyed/looted. When all this is happening, the administration remains inactive as if nothing is happening. Outside Punjab, the police becomes a party to the lawlessness.

These are the immediate reactions, without ascertaining who the terrorists could be. Are they Pakistanis trained as Sikhs? Or Hindus in Sikh garb? False beards and yellow turbans have been recovered from some Hindu places. No one tries to find out whether it is the doing of Congress (I) or some one else's *shararat*. A few years ago, a president of the Congress (I) Punjab unit was known to have contacts with terrorists. Discontinuation of the "Social Reform Movement" on the imposition of the President's rule also is enough hint as to who may be having a truck with the terrorists. This all shows the indifferent attitude of the government at Delhi towards the safety of the public life and property, especially of the minorities.

Overtly, because of terrorism, a number of elected governments in Punjab have been dismissed and replaced by President's rule. But even with this change the situation instead of improving has deteriorated. Take for example, the President's rule in Punjab today. Shri S.S. Ray and the Director General of Police, Shri J.F. Ribeiro, both non-Panjabis, have been imposed upon the State by the Centre. There have been more killings of Sikh youth during this period. Hands of Shri. Rajiv Gandhi and Shri Ribeiro are smeared with the blood of the innocent Sikhs. This is supported by the recent report submitted by the Punjab Human Rights Organisation. It states that fifty Sikh Youths have been killed in the fake encounters in Faridkot district alone, since the imposition of the President's rule in the Punjab. The police has given the list of 34 terrorists killed in "encounters" with the security forces between May 1 and July 31, 1987. The Punjab Human Rights Organisation has contested the claim and released the list of 26 Sikhs arrested by the police and security forces, and later shown as killed in encounters in district Amritsar alone. Shri Ribeiro needs to prove that it is not the blood of innocent Sikh youth that is flowing in Punjab today through false encounters. It would perhaps be worth knowing that wherever and whenever a *real* encounter has taken place it is the police/security forces that have sustained casualties.

According to Mr. B.K.Chun, writing in the *Indian Express* (5 July 1987), the overwhelming majority of the killed Sikh youth are not ter-

rorists. He adds that "instead of depleting, the ranks of active terrorists have swelled. Resentment has grown against the 'excesses of the security forces.'" Mr. S. Mulgaonker, writing in the same Paper (4 July 1987) says, "It has no doubt got rid of some genuine terrorists and almost certainly a large number of innocent people." Shri Pran Chopra writes that ever since the imposition of the President's rule in Punjab, the "conditions have deteriorated more alarmingly than at any time at all," and that "More innocent people are being killed every day than at any time before." (*Indian Express*, 2 Sep 87). And Shri Ribeiro in an interview with *THE TRIBUNE* (30 Aug 87) had himself admitted that "The vigorous campaign has resulted in increasing the number of hardcore terrorists. They have got more men and better organisation. They are causing havoc."

The terrorists are capable of striking anywhere and at any time. Since the dawn of the new year their activities have increased and they are certainly not "on the run". Writing about it *INDIA TODAY* (15 February 1988) says: "It made nonsense of Governor Sidhartha Shankar Ray's earlier claim that stability was returning to the state."

Thus, the responsibility for the birth of terrorism in the Punjab and its subsequent spread lies with Bharat Sarkar. The boasts and provocative speeches of Shri Ribeiro have added oil to the fire. Shri S.S. Ray, the governor of Punjab and Shri Ribeiro, the "Top Cop", have failed in the job (curbing of terrorism) entrusted to them by their masters in Delhi.

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Guru Gobind Singh

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only provide guide-posts but also remove misconceptions and apprehensions. Even today Guru lives and lives more pronouncedly. Satgur Jagata Hai Deo.

To realize the kingdom of the Lord within oneself, one has not to pay only lip-service to the commands but one has to find the same determination that the Gurus displayed in relentlessly fighting tyranny without caring for the consequences. One is liberated only when one is concerned with others more than self, when one is imbued with the spirit of righteousness and when one considers that the body is a *Theekra* as Guru Tegh Bahadur practised it. The light that burns in the body makes it useful instrument of divine action but when the fear of death makes it impossible for anyone to function for divine action, it means that the man is dead, whether he breathes or not. And breathing is real breathing only if it brings the remembrance of the Lord in every breath.

The story of our Gurus is remarkable not only in the teachings they have left us but in every action of theirs both through their own work and also through the universal actions that they spread

throughout the society. I sometimes wonder how and why it is that a Sikh is contracted, why a Sikh is not open, free and universal. The love of the Guru, for it passes not only his adherent, and followers but all mankind.

And that condition is perpetually moulded by ceaseless interior prayer. Ceaseless interior prayer is possible only through renunciation. Renunciation, not as an external action, to hoodwink the people and become burden on them to provide food but to practise renunciation at home amidst all the rough and tumble of life.

A Sikh of the Guru is by nature free. Freedom comes from freedom from dependence, freedom from wants, freedom from desires and, indeed freedom from ill-will. One who has no illwill is free to spread love. And the love never binds. Love is freedom itself. All the kings and emperors of the world are tied up. No one is free. The real kingdom is with the one who has controlled the desire to hurt, the desire to amass wealth, the desire to become big, the desire to be recognized the desire to go to the top the desire to be praised or the desire to be honoured. The only desire of the Khalsa is to receive the charand-hoor of the Sangat and to receive the love of his Guru.

Malayalam's Thematic Go Back

By K.P.R. Pillai

Something is happening in Malayalam literature—one of the most vibrant and lively in India. One may dub it "Back to Classics Movement", even though no such movement actually exists. This is noticeable from a series of works belonging both to fiction and non-fiction categories which came out in the recent past. Most of them originated from the *Mahabharata* and a few from the *Ramayana*. Not that there are no other books. There are quite a few of them.

Bharata Paryadanam

'Bharata paryadanam' (journey through the Mahabharata) by the late scholar Kuttikrishna Marar may be taken as a trend-setter. It appeared roughly 40 years ago, when the whole of India was boiling with the struggle for independence. It was a scholar's evaluation of certain incidents of the *Mahabharata* and the author's attempt to put the moral stamp on otherwise inexplicable actions of epic heroes and heroines. The book was a best-seller and has

gone into many editions. Even now, it is in short supply. Though Marar has written half a dozen books, similar in nature, they did not achieve similar popularity.

The immediate sequel to this book was another book based on the *Mahabharata* by Kalavamkandan Balakrishnan entitled "Ini njan urangatte" (let me sleep now) in which the Pandavas, their mother Kunti and spouse Panchali are the main characters.

Many novels and short stories followed. At least three of the mass circulation periodicals were serializing stories based on the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* at one time.

This is not confined to novels alone. In poetry also the trend set in. Poets who began with resounding leftist poems have now come back to the epic trail.

Recent Books

A couple of books that came out recently must be mentioned here. One is "Rantam oozham" (the second round) by M.T. Vasudevan Nair who needs no introduction. Awards, national and international, given to him are innumerable, both for literature and for cinema. His latest work is

"Rantam oozham", a novel-like re-rendering of the Mahabharata. It is slightly interpretative and his main character is Bhimsena. It was first serialized and then brought out in book form. The second book is "Tatwamasi" by Prof. Sukumar Azhikode, one of the greatest living scholars of Kerala. It is a work on philosophy, based mainly upon the Upanishads. It was also a best seller and went into three editions in one year.

Kalakaumudi, one of the prestigious Malayalam publications was serializing stories from the Bible. Recent rumblings about the translation of an award winning Malayalam short story on the Holy Prophet can still be heard all over the country. Even the mass circulation CPI(M) weekly *Desabhimani* serialized a Malayalam rendering of Mudrarak.

Social Overhaul

Coming to the changeover from matriarchal to patriarchal system, it was one of the greatest social upheavals that the world has ever seen. It was not just a change of lineage. It thoroughly overhauled the entire society. For one who is not acquainted with the

intricate working of the matriarchal society. It is useless to explain the implications of the change. Not a single book, novel, drama or ballad has been brought out on the subject. C. Radhakrishnan, another literary luminary brought out a novel, "Elaam Marakkunna Kadal" (the sea that forgets all), and promised it to be the first of a trilogy on the subject. But soon he was swallowed by the silver screen Thakazhi's magnum opus, "Coir" which touches the subject only at a tangent. Strangeness of the situation can be brought out only when we compare it with what came out after the Industrial Revolution in various western countries.

Malayalam literature has a background of its own. The first Tamil epic *Chilapatikaram* by Elanko Adigal (crown Prince-Yuvaraja) was written in Kerala, at Thiruvanchikulam, during the Perumal regime. Malayalam is now ascribed by scholars to be the offspring of a language, originally the mother of Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Oriya and Sinhalese. After branching off from the umbilical cord, it remained affiliated to Chentamil for quite long. Later it succumbed to the incursions of Sanskrit. Initial contributions to Sanskrit by Malayali writers include *Mukundamala* by Kulasekhara, *Yudhishtiravijayam* and *Nalodayam* (both Yamaka kavyas) by Vasudeva, *Ascharyachoodamani* by Saktibhadra, and *Sree Krishna Karnamrita*, by Leelasuka.

Poetical Beginning

As in other languages, in Malayalam too, the beginning in literature was in poetry. At first they were in the form of chants and mantras. Then came Ramacharitam Pattu in the 12th century. It was almost trilingual—a mixture of Chentamil, Sanskrit and Malayalam. Real Malayalam poetry got a start with the poets known collectively as Niranam poets. They are believed to be Rama panicker, Madhava panicker and Sankara panicker, who belonged to Niranam village in Tiru Ramakatha, Bharatham, Bhagavatham and Bhagavadgita rendering into Malayalam are their works.

Poems like Chandrolsavam which simply could not be categorized into any known group also issued forth around the XV century.

Then came a unique style of literature called Champus. Punam and Mazhamangalam nambudiris are supposed to be the greatest exponents of this style. It was a kind of rhythmic prose, not to be confused with Kadambari style and reformers of its script. Thunchathu Ramanujan Ezhuthaschan, eulogised as the father of modern Malayalam and Kalakathu Kunchan Nambiar were the next to follow.

Namibar brought literature to the doorsteps of the common man. He

was followed later by the Venmani duo.

After these two, the literary arena remained rather dull for a long period. Revived activity was seen only after the spread of English education in early 19th century. The first Malayalam novel was "Indulekha", by Oyyarathu Chandu Menon. Great historical novels by V.V. Raman Pillai, Appan Thampuran and major Sardar K.M. Panicker also enriched the scene.

It is remarkable that though many eminent poems of religious character came out through the centuries, Malayalis had to wait till the XIX century for a Malayalam Mahakavya written by Azhikattu Ramakurup. Then there was a flood of them, Kesaveeyam, Sree Yesu Vijayam, etc. being the most prominent. The two Koil Thampurans, Kerala Varma and Raja Raja Varma translated most of the Sanskrit Mahakavyas into Malayalam. Kundoor, Manradiar and others added colour and splendour to the period. Vallathol came out with his own Mahakavya, the Chitrayogam. He even translated the Rig Veda into Malayalam. Ulloor brought out Umakeralam. All these Kavyas strictly confirmed to Dandi's 18 rules to be followed while composing a Mahakavya.

Ulloor, Vallathol and Kumaran Asan, known as the poetical Trinity marked the breaking away of Malayalam poetry from traditional path. Their capable followers, Vayalar Rama Varma and Prof. O.N.V. Kurup, along with Kadammanitta and a few other masters made the breach look unbridgeable.

In the field of Malayalam drama, work began with translations from classical works. Modernism in Malayalam drama began with Pulimana Parameswara Pillai and Prof. N. Krishna Pillai using modern themes with telling effect. But return to religious themes was quick with the late C.N. Sreekantham Nair leading the pack.

Writers are advisers and soothsayers for all ages and lands. They deal in ideals that lead man to progress. Man is the raw material for their creations and human society is their canvas, their workshop. They use truth to cement their ideals to human souls.

If it is so, why is it that Malayali intellectuals failed to make use of the ferment that shook their society. They have written about all things imaginable in all kinds and forms humanly possible. Paucity of ideas in an exhausted society may have persuaded the intellectuals to search the epics for thematic support. The cause of this strange condition in Malayalam literature is worth the study of litterateurs and sociologists.

Whatever the reason, the revival of the epic spirit in literature luckily serves the purpose of building bridge between past and present, thus making progress into future easier and more fruitful.

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By Ludwina A. Joseph

Are there really two faces of apartheid? Until recently I would have argued as passionately as anyone else against it. But that was before I met Dr J.N. Reddy, a Member of Parliament in South Africa's House of Delegates, which is part of the country's three-tiered Parliament. Dr Reddy heads the Solidarity Party and is the Leader of the House of Delegates where his party won 16 of the 40 seats in the September 6 parliamentary elections.

Let me say at the outset that Dr Reddy honestly believes that apartheid goes against human nature and is "committed to the elimination of discrimination based on race, colour, creed or any other basis". The only difference is his sincere conviction that the goals of multi-racial democracy in South Africa will be achieved through peaceful means by all South Africans: white, black, coloured and Indian. And, most importantly, he is certain that dismantling of apartheid will come by negotiation, discussion and a logical progression but definitely not by the aggressive threats and hostility displayed by

the world community or the African National Congress.

I caught Dr Reddy almost by chance at the end of his visit to Washington where he had come at the invitation of various church groups. He is a charming and very articulate man and the fact that an Afrikaaner officer from the South African Embassy was in attendance was obviously a sign of acceptance and a promise of far-reaching changes to come in the government that everyone loves to hate.

As the name indicates, Dr Reddy's forefathers came from Andhra Pradesh near the temple town of Tirupati and went to work nearly 125 years ago on the sugarcane fields around Durban as indentured labourers. Many in the Indian community subsequently took to market gardening and farming and are now making a very respectable living for themselves in various professions: teaching, law, accountancy, medicine and even in government. An average Indian salary in South Africa is in the region of 50,000 Rand per annum (roughly equivalent to 20,000 dollars) which, even by North American standards, is good. And that answered my question about why Indians preferred to stay on in South Africa

and battle an unequal and much-maligned system of government—instead of returning to India or going elsewhere—it was simple economics.

Dr Reddy said he failed to understand India's public position of spitting venom on South Africa (and secretly trading diamonds, was my aside!) when what India and the rest of the world wanted (i.e. the elimination of all discrimination) was being brought about slowly and surely by peaceful means. He spoke of all the changes that had taken place in the last fifty years since he joined the Natal Indian Congress. In fact India's knowhow and experience in the cottage industry sector could greatly benefit blacks and coloureds in South Africa if New Delhi could only be persuaded to cooperate and not just "talk of sanctions".

Dr Reddy spoke with a feeling of pride about South Africa's ach-

ievements: it had fought the world alone and survived with the ingenuity and skill that came from having its back to the wall. His country was the only nation to produce oil from coal successfully and its indigenous armaments industry, which had grown from need, had been tried and tested in the African bush. He felt that part of the reasoning behind the call for sanctions was protectionist and was born of "economic jealousy" on the part of less successful nations.

He was emphatic that the African National Congress and the breakaway Pan-African Congress would have "to come to terms with reality". There had to be a movement "towards conciliation" and a scaling down of demands. No more "rhetoric about a liberation army gloriously freeing a white-ruled South Africa and liberation of the blacks, Indians and coloureds". That obviously is "not going to happen in a million years". Nor would threats work and that was really "pivotal". The only way to loosen the tentacles of the system was to "liberate it from within" and to ensure that all interested parties came together at the negotiating table.

And Mandela would soon be freed. He was sure it would happen very soon. He was confident that Mandela would show the world that he was not an embittered man because the South African administration had treated him unkindly.

South Africa has been for so long the world's favourite whipping boy and, for some countries, a convenient ploy to distract public attention from problems closer to home that many governments had lost sight of the ultimate goal—which was the ending of all discrimination—and got caught up instead in a fierce and often vitriolic debate on sanctions. But Dr Reddy was insistent that sanctions only hurt those at the bottom of the social scale—the blacks and the coloureds who were struggling to better themselves. Sanctions did not contribute towards ending an unacceptable system. They only put up the backs of those who mattered in the government.

He recalled a conversation with previous Indian Foreign Minister Swaran Singh. He says he took the Sardar Saheb to task for speaking on behalf of people of who's plight he knew nothing except hearsay. It was "totally against freedom". Who was India to champion the cause of the one million South African Indians without first finding out what it was they wanted in the first place? According to Dr Reddy, Swaran Singh accepted the truth of this.

Trying to help South Africa find a constitutional framework would be more to the purpose than sanctions. After all where in Africa had

democracy survived? Hadn't fragile democracies fallen everywhere giving way to heavy-handed military or civilian governments of the right or equally repressive dictatorships of the left? In South Africa they could not afford for that to happen. Their experiment "had absolutely to succeed". Which is why they would have to proceed "with infinite care and caution". An international conference would be the first major step and he felt that, instead of isolating itself, "India should play a constructive role".

South Africa had a tremendous potential of mineral resources and was also a very large primary producer. Such a vast potential could be harnessed for peace with perhaps a regional common market (maybe even modelled on the EEC) being formed in southern Africa with the participation of all the surrounding countries. Together they could form diamond, gold and cobalt cartels instead of letting the rest of the world exploit them. They could generate and share hydro-electric power and also produce oil from coal. The scope for cooperation and development was endless, he pronounced with a visionary gleam in his eye.

Dr Reddy was optimistic about the political reform plans unveiled by President Frederik de Klerk. Even if still imperfect, the plans made fundamental changes that would give black and other non-white groups a share in political life. It was not a simple system for one man-one vote but a concept of group voting and group participation created by black vote blocks on the basis of tribal homelands. Moreover, Mr de Klerk's met with Zambian President after his leadership had emerged in South Africa. He called it a leadership that was really serious about resolving the long and costly conflict between the white minority and the black majority.

He hoped that, at this crucial turning-point in South Africa's history when the country was trying to make a peaceful transition and rid itself of the stigma of apartheid and international isolation, wiser counsel would prevail with his countrymen and that they would not precipitate a harsh crackdown on themselves or set back the clock on reform.

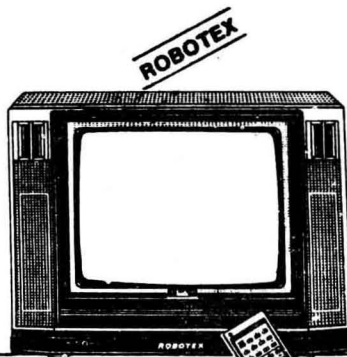
In India, our highly moralistic position—a legacy of Nehru and the heady days of non-alignment and often a source of great irritation to most Westerners—induces us to see everything in terms of black and white and good and evil as if there was no grey undefinable area in between. Dr Reddy's patently sincere manner demonstrates that—if nothing else—that grey area is worth exploring.

Apartheid An Indian South African's Point of View

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